State/Region

New RFK assassination probe sought

Researchers revive argument that a second gunman was involved

By Linda Deutsch
The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Researchers studying the massive files on the assassination of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy said Tuesday that the case should be reopened to unravel the mystery of one or more extra bullets.

The demand for a reopening of the Kennedy investigation came one day before NBC-TV's "Unsolved Mysteries" rehashed the second-gun theory in the midst of the May ratings sweeps period.

Gregory Stone, a political scientist who has spent nearly two years studying material released from state archives, said it is possible that at least nine bullets and perhaps as many as 12 were fired in the pantry of the Ambassador Hotel on the night of June 5, 1968, when Kennedy was slain.

The convicted assassin, Sirhan B. Sirhan, carried a .22-caliber revolver that held eight shots.

"After 22 years, it is not acceptable to allow fundamental questions to remain unanswered about the murder of one of the greatest public figures of our time," Stone said at a news conference where he was joined by five others, including Paul Schrade, who was wounded in the Kennedy assassination.

"Significant new evidence has recently surfaced suggesting that more shots may have been fired during the assassination of Sen. Robert Kennedy than could have been discharged by Sirhan Sirhan acting alone," he said.

"Coupled with other known facts insufficiently investigated in the past, this evidence demands an objective new inquiry into Sen. Kennedy's death."

Kennedy was hit three times, and five other bullets hit bystanders who survived, police have said. Seven of the bullets were recovered. One bullet is said to have passed through Kennedy's coat before hitting Schrade.

Schrade said Tuesday that he has always doubted the accuracy of the trajectory path reconstructed by police.

He called for the Los Angeles County district attorney and the county Board of Supervisors to reopen the investigation.

"We can't trust the Los Angeles Police Department to do an effective investigation because they did an ineffective one," he said.

United Press International

Sen. Robert F. Kennedy flashes a victory sign at the Ambassador Hotel after winning the 1968 California presidential primary. Researchers are calling for another investigation into his assassination.

Cmdr. William Booth, spokesman for the Police Department, said the second-gun theory was thoroughly explored by investigators and he dismissed Tuesday's allegations as a rehash of old material.

"There are no plans to reopen the investigation. 'Unsolved Mysteries' is reviving the how-many-guns theory. They haven't presented anything that hasn't been presented before," Booth said.

"The investigation identifies a suspect who was arrested and convicted and was sent to prison. That's it."

"It looks like really old stuff to me," said Sandi Gibbons, spokeswoman for the District Attorney's Office. "It looks just like a rehash of something that has already been rehashed."

Schrade and Stone appeared at a news conference along with author Dan Moldea; Philip Melanson, a professor and author; former FBI agent William Bailey; and David Mendelsohn, a TV producer who has researched the case.

The new evidence cited by the group included Moldea's recent interviews with five police officers involved in the investigation who said they remembered seeing bullet holes in a door frame that has since been destroyed. Some said they heard that bullets were removed from the frame.

In addition, Bailey said he remembers seeing bullet holes in the center post between two doors in the pantry. He also said he saw the bases of two .22-caliber bullets in the holes. According to the official police reports on the case, Stone said, no bullets were found anywhere in the walls or door frames of the pantry.

The researchers displayed blown up photos from FBI files of alleged bullet holes in door frames.

They also cited a recently retrieved newspaper report on the assassination aftermath in which a writer reported seeing a piece of molding torn from the wall by police and indicating that two .22-caliber bullets had been removed from it.

Stone said a new investigation could re-examine the unanswered question of why door frames and ceiling tiles from the pantry were destroyed by officials shortly after Sirhan was convicted.

"I consider there is a serious possibility that more than one gun may have been fired during the assassination," Stone said. "At present it's impossible to know for sure.

... However, the evidence that more than one gun may have been fired is clearly sufficient to justify a determined, objective and thorough investigation of that possibility."